

STRATEGIES

(1)(A) The methods AZRSA uses to expand and improve services to individuals with disabilities, including how a broad range of assistive technology (AT) services and assistive technology devices will be provided to those individuals at each stage of the rehabilitation process and how those services and devices will be provided to individuals with disabilities on a statewide basis;

Three years ago, AZRSA used monies set aside for innovation and expansion projects to develop and expand resources within the State, including the area of assistive technology. These projects expanded: a) client and staff resources, b) technical assistance available to staff, c) a statewide website with resource information, and d) procedures and protocols for the delivery of assistive technology. AZRSA plans to continue to provide leadership in these areas.

Strategies:

- Continue cooperative programs with Regional Behavioral Health Authorities, Tribal entities (including 121 programs), Department of Education, as well as Public Education Agencies.
- Provide transition-related information for students, their families and pertinent school personnel through conferences, job fairs, and educational fairs.
- Streamline the vendor qualification process.
- Foster collaboration with private and public agencies, employers, and advocacy and community groups.
- Continue service integration activities with other AZDES agencies statewide.
- Continue participation in yearly Arizona Disabilities Exposition for networking with disability organizations, advocacy groups, and businesses in the community.
- Acquire an updated, comprehensive and efficient data management information system.
- Continue and increase outreach and marketing to community partners; high schools, colleges, advocacy groups and the public statewide.
- Continue coordinated case planning with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) JOBS clients.
- Work with partners to develop pre-vocational services and guidelines regarding the timeliness of referrals
- Expand services to youth, including transitioning students and juvenile corrections, foster care.

Assistive Technology (AT)

- Throughout the VR process, evaluate and provide AT training and devices to VR clients as necessary to benefit from VR services.
- Provide AT equipment such as power adjustable tables, fully adjustable ergonomic chairs, computer systems with products like JAWS, ZoomText, TextHelp, Dragon Naturally Speaking and alternative keyboards and mice available as well as FM

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systems, TTY, amplified phone, video phone in two sites and CCTV's to One-Stop Career Centers across the state.

- Continue to educate employers on the benefits of AT and provide technical assistance in the work setting.
- Co-sponsor "AT in the Saguaro" a comprehensive Assistive Technology Conference that educates staff and clients in new advances in AT.
- Support a computer lab, as part of AT in the Saguaro, for training in the use of the Arizona Virtual One-Stop Internet-based registration and job search database, using AT products typically found in One-Stop locations.
- Offer five comprehensive adjustment programs serving adults who are blind or visually impaired that includes both training and provision of AT necessary for employment. Three of those programs also serve transition age students. The comprehensive adjustment programs also to provide other necessary training and evaluation services needed to address the full range of rehabilitation needs for clients.
- Increase availability and use of assistive technology devices to VR clients through the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP).

(1)(B) Outreach procedures AZRSA uses to identify and serve individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including those with the most significant disabilities, and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;

AZRSA recognizes the importance of serving individuals with disabilities who are minorities, and strives to conduct outreach activities that target ethnic and racial minority populations. The table below illustrates AZRSA's efforts in serving individuals with disabilities who are minorities as compared to the general population of Arizona. AZRSA's percentage of applicants and persons successfully rehabilitated in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program equals or exceeds the minority group's representation in Arizona's general population.

Ethnic/Racial Distribution

AZRSA and Arizona's Population Statistics

Ethnic Group	VR Applicants SFY 2006	VR Successfully Rehabilitated SFY 2006	Arizona Population 2000
Caucasian	67.2%	73.5%	63.8%
Hispanic	18.2%	15.3%	25.3%
African American	9.1%	6.3%	3.1%
American Indian and Alaskan Native	4.4%	3.2%	5.0%
Asian	0.9%	1.4%	1.8%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	0.2%	0.3	0.1%

Statistical source: AZRSA Integrated Management Information System (IRIS) for State Fiscal Year (July 1, 2006-June 30, 2007) and 2000 US Census Summary File 1 (SF 1)

AZRSA is serving diverse ethnic groups in close proportion to their incidence in the general population of Arizona with the exception of the Hispanic population. AZRSA is committed to further identify and increase outreach efforts targeted to individuals with disabilities who are minorities.

New projects to conduct outreach to the Hispanic population are in the development and implementation process. AZRSA strives to increase outreach and service delivery to all individuals within an ethnic group, regardless of the significance of the disability.

Strategies:

- An Orientation to VR video is in the process of being produced which casts minorities with disabilities. The video will be available in Spanish, ASL, open captioning, and descriptive video for the blind and visually impaired. When completed, the video will be widely distributed in DVD format to AZRSA's community stakeholders, such as Centers for Independent Living, behavioral health agencies, schools, and others.
- A marketing plan is in development for optimal visibility and outreach to engage individuals with disabilities, significant disabilities and of various minority backgrounds.
- State-wide focus groups are being held in communities in which AZRSA offices are located. Vocational Rehabilitation clients, advocates, local agencies and members of the community with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are represented. AZRSA provides interpreters for various languages, including Spanish and American Sign Language.
- AZRSA continues to recruit and hire staff of diverse ethnic backgrounds and language skills to accommodate the needs of minorities. Minority populations and demographics are often reviewed to ensure sure that individuals with the most significant disabilities who are minorities are being served.
- Annual stipends to VR Counselors who are proficient in other languages, such as Spanish or American Sign Language (ASL) are provided by AZRSA.
- AZRSA partners and collaborates with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Employment Administration (EA) Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers (MSFW) Outreach Program. The Yuma Farm Worker Coalition/Vocational Rehabilitation Task Force is working on developing a model project to increase farm worker accessibility to VR program services. Functions for the Yuma Farmworker Coalition include coordination of programs, outreach and support to farmworkers with disabilities, and feedback to stakeholders. The Coalition is focusing on improving outreach to underserved populations, utilizing the "*promotores*" model for delivering information and promoting involvement.
- Memos of Understanding have been established by AZRSA with five of the Section 121-VR Grant projects with Native American Tribes as follows: Fort Mohave, Navajo Nation, Tohono O'Odham, White Mountain Apache, and Hopi. The MOUs coordinate VR programming for eligible American Indians with disabilities residing within or near the boundaries of each respective tribal entity. MOUs permit both the Native American VR

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Tribal programs and State VR programs to serve Native American clients under both Federal grants when necessary.

- AZRSA has developed, and improved community rehabilitation programs for Native Americans as follows:
 - City of Phoenix Clear Path Tribal program provides outreach to native tribal members who reside in Phoenix and in the Gila River Indian Community.
 - Helping Hands provides transportation services for individuals with disabilities in the Navajo Nation, Page, and surrounding areas to create opportunities for employment.
 - Northern Arizona Regional Behavioral Health Authority (NARBHA) created “Tailgate Café”, a VR client-run business which provides training and employment opportunities in food service for Apache Tribe members diagnosed with serious mental illness.
- AZRSA will continue collaborative efforts with One-Stop Career Centers to outreach non-traditional clients into the VR program.

(1)(C) As applicable, the AZRSA’s plan of the state for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs;

In order to meet the needs of Arizona’s diverse client population, AZRSA plans to continue identifying needs and funding programs to meet those needs. The plan will incorporate the results of: (a) *2006 Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities*, (b) Governor’s State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) *Customer and Provider Satisfaction Surveys*, (c) the State Independent Living Council’s *2005 Needs Assessment* and *2005-06 Focus Groups*, as well as AZRSA’s continuing customer satisfaction surveys, (d) the current Community Needs Survey.

Strategies:

- Develop an efficient vendor/provider procurement system to ensure qualified suppliers are available to assist the AZRSA in providing effective VR services.
- Develop and implement Performance-Based Contracts to improve efficiencies in the delivery of employment services.
- Redevelop priorities for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs.

(1)(D) Strategies AZRSA uses to improve the performance of the State with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators established pursuant to Section 106 of the Act;

Strategies:

- Assess, redesign, and standardize the AZRSA VR orientation process so that it clearly communicates employment as the goal of the VR program, and clearly explains the parameters of the VR program, i.e. application, eligibility determination, IPE development, responsibilities of the client and staff, services, etc.

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- Recruit and retain additional VR counselors to increase services to VR clients statewide.
- Adopt continuous improvement principles and quality management processes to increase the rehabilitation rate and to improve the quality of employment outcomes.
- Ensure quality services by conducting quarterly case reviews, and offering ongoing training to continually improve timeliness and delivery of services to clients.
- Promote VR success stories via the media to increase intake of new clients.
- Conduct studies of unsuccessful closures and develop strategies to decrease numbers of unsuccessful closures.
- Provide quality vocational counseling and vocational planning to VR clients for optimal employment outcomes.
- Continue to address training and educational needs of AZRSA VR staff to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in serving clients with various types of disabilities.

(1)(E) Strategies used by AZRSA for assisting other components of the statewide workforce investment system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

AZRSA is located within the same Department and Division responsible for supporting the statewide Workforce Investment System (WIS). This provides many opportunities for cooperation and collaboration.

Arizona is fully committed to ensuring that universal access is a critical characteristic of the WIS. This policy recognizes that the full range of employment and training programs and services delivered through the State's One-Stop delivery system are accessible and meet the needs of a wide variety of customers. This group may include; dislocated workers, displaced homemakers, low-income individuals such as migrant and seasonal farm workers, women, minorities, individuals training for non-traditional employment, veterans, public assistance recipients, and individuals with multiple barriers to employment including older individuals, people with limited English-speaking proficiency, and individuals with disabilities.

In accordance with WIA regulations, the needs of persons with a wide range of disabilities will be met within the Workforce Investment System, especially within the One-Stop centers. These needs will be met, in part, by:

Strategies:

- ensure that the One Stop Career Centers are physically, attitudinally, and environmentally accessible for persons with disabilities;
- make training materials, labor market information and other print media available in alternative formats such as Braille, large print or electronic means as requested by the individuals;
- equip all One-Stop Career Centers with a TTY or TTD device and train staff on its use;
- familiarize staff with the telephonic relay service for the deaf and will sign language interpreters on call;
- develop a comprehensive training program for One-Stop Career Center staff to increase disability awareness and improve service accessibility;

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- encourage all local and State WIA staff and One-Stop partners to participate in disability awareness training sponsored by the Arizona Rehabilitation Services Administration to ensure that programs and services are accessible to persons with disabilities through the use of assistive technology;
- ensure that each One-Stop Career Center will have, at a minimum, a computer available to customers containing common accessibility devices such as JAWS, Zoom Text, enabled sticky keys, modified keyboards and other input devices;
- train staff on the maintenance and operation of available Assistive Technology devices;
- develop coordinated projects with WIA partners to improve the employability, employment and career advancements of persons with disabilities;
- institutionalize and expand the Disability Navigator program so as to ensure that each One Stop-Career Center will have at least one Disability Navigator to assist persons with disabilities to access One Stop services;
- maintain an active partnership with the Employer's Disability Resource Network, a coalition of employment and rehabilitation organizations who are available to provide information and resources;
- co-locate VR staff within One-Stop Career Centers.

(2) (A) Strategies to address the needs identified in 4.11(c)(1)

(1) Strategies to address the findings of the SNAP:

- AZRSA will continue its outreach efforts to all Arizonans with disabilities through increased marketing because Arizona is one of the fastest growing states in the US, with one of the highest minority populations as documented by US Census data;
- Public awareness, outreach to community partners, and publicizing the VR program are among the various marketing strategies;
- Monitor third party agreements to ensure equitable access to all individuals with disabilities.
- SNAP findings within specific areas of need are as follows. Strategies to address the following issues are listed in (4.11(d)).

(2) Strategies to achieve the Goals and Priorities identified in the State Plan.

PRIORITY 1

INCREASE STATE APPROPRIATED MATCH

AZRSA strategies to increase state appropriated match:

- Prepare Decision Packages and Policy Issues for additional dollars for VR match request;

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- Increase knowledge of AZRSA client successes by the Arizona Legislature and general public through councils, consumer and advocacy groups, and other constituency groups;
- Partner the Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) with AZRSA and other councils to prepare a VR Fact Sheet for legislative distribution;
- Work with the Arizona Disability Advocacy Coalition (AZDAC), other advisory councils and advocacy groups to prepare news releases and information related to VR and the lack of state match issue;
- Develop an ongoing portfolio of successful VR clients for public relations purposes;
- Share successful closure stories with local Legislators.
- Promote VR success stories via the media to increase intake of new clients.

PRIORITY 2 **STABILIZE THE WORKFORCE**

AZRSA strategies to stabilize the workforce:

- Provide regular feedback via performance evaluations, recognition, mentoring and professional leadership opportunities for staff;
- Form a Personnel Task Team to identify barriers in the personnel system, complete an analysis of the personnel process barriers so as to generate recommendations for improvement;
- Decrease time to hire employees;
- Recruit additional VR counselors to increase services to VR clients statewide.

PRIORITY 3 **ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A QUALITY MANAGEMENT PROCESS**

AZRSA strategies to establish and implement a quality management process:

- Streamline the vendor qualification process;
- Acquire an updated, comprehensive and efficient data management information system;
- Obtain feedback from consumer focus groups regarding systemic issues requiring action;
- Develop strategies to cover vacant caseloads within a 30 day time frame of the absence;
- Utilize the new case review instrument and implement a new Case Review Process;
- Review current contract monitoring practices and/or revise or develop new contract monitoring practices where necessary;

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- Utilize the information from contract monitoring as indicated in the quality management process;
- Provide feedback to individual counselors and their supervisors from VR Consumer Satisfaction Surveys and utilize this input for recognition and need for continuous improvement;
- Recognize and reward counselors who are proficient in other languages;
- Develop an efficient vendor/provider procurement system to ensure qualified suppliers are available to assist AZRSA in providing effective, efficient VR services;
- Develop and implement Performance-Based Contracts to improve efficiencies in the delivery of employment services, which include job development and placement services;
- Adopt continuous improvement principles and quality management processes to increase the rehabilitation rate and to improve the quality of employment outcomes;
- Ensure quality services by conducting quarterly case reviews, and offering ongoing training to continually improve timeliness and delivery of services to clients.

PRIORITY 4 **INCREASE VR SUCCESS RATE**

AZRSA strategies to increase VR success rate:

- Provide transition-related information for students, their families and pertinent school personnel through conferences, job fairs, and educational fairs;
- Continue coordinated case planning with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) JOBS clients;
- Work with partners to develop pre-vocational services and guidelines regarding the timeliness of referrals;
- Evaluate and provide AT training and devices to VR clients as necessary to benefit from VR services throughout the VR process;
- Utilize Benefits Counseling to enable clients to make an informed choice regarding going to work;
- Increase availability and use of assistive technology devices to VR clients through the Arizona Technology Access Program (AzTAP);
- Offer comprehensive adjustment programs serving adults who are blind or visually impaired that includes both training and provision of AT necessary for employment;
- Assess, redesign, and standardize the AZRSA VR orientation process so that it clearly communicates employment as the goal of the VR program;

4.11(d) Strategies

- Provide quality vocational counseling and vocational planning to VR clients for optimal employment outcomes;
- Address ongoing training and educational needs of AZRSA VR staff to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities in serving clients with various types of disabilities.

PRIORITY AREA 5 **ENHANCE SERVICE AVAILABILITY**

AZRSA strategies to enhance service availability:

- Expand services to youth, including transitioning students and juvenile corrections, foster care;
- Create an Orientation to VR video which showcases minorities with disabilities;
- Allocate resources based on an updated established formula;
- Recruit, hire and retain staff of diverse ethnic backgrounds and language skills;
- Partner and collaborate with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Employment Administration (EA) Migrant Seasonal Farm Workers Outreach Program (MSFW) to further develop outreach efforts in Yuma County;
- Redevelop priorities for establishing, developing, or improving community rehabilitation programs.

PRIORITY AREA 6 **INCREASE CLIENT ACCESS TO OTHER DES AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

AZRSA strategies to increase client access to other DES and community services:

- Continue cooperative programs with Regional Behavioral Health Authorities, Tribal entities (including 121 programs), Department of Education, as well as Public Educational Agencies;
- Foster collaboration with private and public agencies, employers, and advocacy and community groups;
- Continue service integration activities with other AZDES agencies statewide;
- Provide AT equipment to One-Stop Career Centers across the state;
- Ensure that the One Stop Career Centers are physically, attitudinally and environmentally accessible for persons with disabilities;
- Equip all One-Stop Career centers with a TTY or TTD device and train staff on it's use;

4.11(d) Strategies

- Provide a comprehensive training program for One-Stop Career Center staff to increase disability awareness and improve service accessibility;
- Develop coordinated projects with WIA partners to improve the employability, employment and career advancements of persons with disabilities through the integration of persons with disabilities as One-Stop staff;
- Institutionalize the Disability Navigator program and have at least one Disability Navigator to assist persons with disabilities to access One Stop Career Center services;
- Maintain an active partnership with the Employer's Disability Resource Network, a coalition of employment and rehabilitation organizations who are available to provide employers information and resources;
- Co-locate VR staff within One-Stop Career Centers.

PRIORITY AREA 7 **MARKETING AND OUTREACH**

AZRSA strategies to do marketing and outreach:

- Continue participation in yearly Arizona Disabilities Exposition for networking with disability organizations, advocacy groups, and businesses in the community;
- Continue and increase outreach and marketing to community partners; high schools, colleges, advocacy groups and the public statewide;
- Continue to educate employers on the benefits of AT and provide technical assistance in the work setting;
- Continue collaborative efforts with One-Stop Career Centers to outreach non-traditional clients into the VR program;
- Target individuals with disabilities from minority and disability populations who may be unserved or underserved, including individuals with most significant disabilities and individuals with disabilities in need of supported employment;
- Develop a marketing plan for optimal visibility and outreach to engage individuals with disabilities, significant disabilities and more of various cultural backgrounds.

(2)(B) Strategies to support the innovation and expansion activities identified in subparagraph 4.12(a) (1) and (2) of the Plan;

Many of the strategies listed above will require new or expanded innovation and programming. Priorities will be set as a result of further input from community rehabilitation program providers, councils, stakeholders and other interested parties.

(2)(C) Strategies to overcome identified barriers relating to equitable access to and participation of individuals with disabilities in the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and State Supported Employment Services Program.

(See “Strategies” above and Attachments 4.8(b) (4) and 6.3)